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**LETTER FROM JOHN BANISTER<sup>1</sup> TO ELISHA  
TUPPER, GUERNSEY**

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Virginia July 11<sup>th</sup> 1775.

Sir

I had the Pleasure to receive your letter by Cap<sup>n</sup> Maingey on the Lord Chatham; and have literally complied with its direction respecting the Shipping & Consigning your Tobacco. Hearing that Cap<sup>n</sup> Maingey's Ship was about to be lengthened, I had purchased between forty & fifty Hogsheads of Tobacco, hoping for some further Commissions, towards the Completion of her Load; but at a Meeting of the Merchants last Month and about two days before Maingey's arrival I disposed of the Tobacco, fearing to risque it on my hands any longer, when the Price had risen so high as 27/7½. a Price at which I could most readily have sold yours, and the rest designed for Maingey's Load.

The early arrival of your Commission afforded me the utmost Pleasure as it enabled me to save 17½ per Cent, on two hundred Pounds, and fifteen on the last drafts, besides at least fifty shillings a Hogshead in the Purchase of the Tobacco. There are usually at the time the Courts are held for legal Proceedings, in April & October general Meetings of the Merchants, for the Payment of money, Negotiation of exchange &c. at these Meetings the Bills on England &c are principally disposed, & the Price of Exchange is exceedingly fluc-

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<sup>1</sup> This letter from the British Public Record Office (C. O. 5/158) has been sent us by E. Alfred Jones, Esq., of London, the author of the well known work on old American communion plate. It was written by Col. John Banister, of "Battersea" near Petersburg. He was afterwards a Colonel in the Revolutionary Army and a member of Congress. For an account of the Banister family see this Magazine XI, 164, 165.

tuating from various causes, as scarcity of Money high Price of, & demand for the articles made in the Country, particularly Tobacco. These Meetings used to be regularly held four times a year, but they are now only general in April sometimes June, in Octo<sup>r</sup> or November; At these meetings it is usual for Merchants to sell Bills & provide money for the Purchase of Tobacco. Last November, at W<sup>m</sup>burg, the exchange between this and England rose to 35 per C<sup>t</sup>, owing to the extreme avidity with which Bills were sought after in order to remit to England. A Fortnight had not elapsed before the rise of Tobacco, & the fall of exchange became obvious. The Moment I received your letter, about the 10<sup>th</sup> of december, authorising me to draw for the Purchase of the Tobacco, I set about the disposal of the Bills as fast as I could see an opportunity, of either getting money for them, or applying them to my own use. The Event amply justified this Proceedings, as in a few days after I got 32½ per C<sup>t</sup> for your first Bills, no Bills would command money at 25 per C<sup>t</sup>, in this Place, I therefore sent 200 Ster<sup>l</sup> to Phripp & Bowdoin who luckily procured 30 per Cent. at Norfolk. The Commissions from M<sup>r</sup> de Jersey Agent for the Ship, not arriving till February, the Scene became extremely changed. Bills had been constantly falling, Tobacco continually rising during the whole time, untill Tobacco had reached 24/Ster<sup>l</sup> and Bills were reduced to 15 per Cent. I do not know how far these Gentlemen may be satisfied with the Purchase I have made for them, but if they reflect upon the Tobaccos having been purchased @ 3/6 per Cent under the Price current when their last Bills were sold, I hope they will do me the Justice to think, I have not been an unprofitable Agent, as at the Rate I sold my own Tobacco, & their's was much better, they would have been gainers exclusive of Commission at least £200 upon the Purchase. A Continuance of the Intercourse between yourself and the other Gentlemen of your Place, commenced thro your kind Influence in our Behalf, I had hoped would have been mutually beneficial, and of long continuance; but Reasons of a political nature forbid a commercial Intercourse

with G. Britain, & the substituting Force instead of Reason prohibits, by Act of Parliament, & naval Force, our Trade with all the rest of the world. This Interruption I hope will be temporary & that a Revival of our Correspondence will immediately succeed to a Reconciliation with the Mother Country; When this may happen God only knows, as things are brought in the Massachusetts Bay, to the ultimate Resort for Justice by an appeal to the Sword. There never was a Country in any age more oppressed, than that of N. England. The Blockade of Boston continued now more than a year has totally & finally ruined that Place, & in the general Wreck many large Fortunes laid out in Improvements, are gone to Ruin; and all this because the People of that Country will not submit to despotic sway.

About the 17<sup>th</sup> of last April, the first Hostilities commenced by an attempt in the Regulars to seize and destroy a Magazine which had been deposited in the Court house, at Concord. This the Regulars effected, but the Consequence may be Evils of the most fatal kind.

The accounts of this action are variously related, according to the Party they come from. The Provincials swear the Regulars fired on, and shed the blood of the Country People first, on the other hand the Regulars with equal Pertinacity, declare the *Rebels, as they are now called* gave the first fire. Be that as it may it remains unquestioned that the Regulars seized the Property of the People in plunder [ing and [cut off] the Court h e]. Will not such Conduct justify Resistance?

The Congress have now appointed Col. Washington, General of the Army at Boston, with orders to act defensively, hoping that Administration will at length relent, and stop the further Effusion of human Blood, already too much wasted in a Cause the most Iniquitous, that ever disgraced the annals of any Country. This Contest originated with the enactment of a Law imposing Stamp duties, in America, with which a Compliance was utterly impossible from the scarcity of Gold & Silver Coins in which alone a payment was to be received; but this was not our objection to the operation of the Law.

We held it fundamentally wrong, against the Genius of our Constitution, & against common right, that any Person should impose a Tax upon others, of the Burthen of which he did not himself participate. The numerous and just Complaints against the oppression of this act produced its repeal before a single instance of its Execution had been submitted to; but it was repealed from its inexpediency & not from its being essentially wrong and unconstitutional. Here the latent assertion of the right was discernible. But it became quite apparent in the declaratory Act by which the Parliament claimed a right to tax, and by Law to bind America in all cases whatever. This you will easily see struck at the Foundation of American Liberty, inasmuch as the Parliament claimed an unlimited Right of legislation including of course that of taxation, & therefore the unlimited disposal of American Property. Upon the arrival of this Law it was warmly protested against in this Country, by way of Petition to the King, Memorial to the House of Lords and Remonstrance to the Commons; the Language of these several addresses was respectful, 'tho spirited, and contained a detail of American Rights, from the Beginning of its Settlement, to its Charters in Confirmation of the Settlers Rights as Englishmen, & pointing out a form of Government as Colonists, shewing plainly that the Right of Legislation & therefore taxation was inherent in us as Englishmen & confirmed by Charter, that these Priviledges had been often recognized by our Kings, who had often sent over the Forms of Laws to be considered & passed here, by the Assemblies, which had been returned with emendations and additions, as best suited the Circumstances of the Country, for their Completion by the royal Concurrence. The Colonists further alledge that the acts of Navigation for monopolising & restraining their Trade, were productive of immense gain to the Parent State, & by confining the Colonies to the Trade of G Britain only, had a manifest Tendency to keep them dependant, & the Mother Country opulent & Powerful. That if the Parent State insisted on a monopoly of our Trade, she should desist from the claim of taxation, on the contrary, "say the Colon-

ists," let us have a free trade to all the world & we will readily pay a Proportion of the expences of Government, but do not by insisting on both exact from us double taxation. From that time they have with uniformity proceeded in a Plan to establish a new System of Government in America unknown to the Constitution, and at length the article of Tea, on which a Duty had been reserved as a Precedent of Arbitrary taxation, was sent in large Quantities to Boston, to gather on it a tax of Parliamentary imposition, supposing that this w<sup>d</sup> fix on that People a submission to the asserted right of Parliament to tax America, but the People resisted in a riotous manner the landing the Tea, & in the end threw it overboard. This w<sup>d</sup> be called in London, in Paris, & indeed I believe in Turkey nothing but a Riot, but what is the Consequence—a British Parliament, for this Trespass, determin[d] to punish indiscriminately the whole Town, involving innocent & guilty in one common Ruin. And to give a Sanction to any oppression which Power might choose to inflict upon them, three Acts of Parliament passed that August Legislature, for blocking up the Harbour, & inderdicting all kind of Commerce, another for altering their Charter & subverting their Constitution, and a third for authorising the apprehending & carrying for Tryal to G. Britain any Persons committing capital offences; and to enforce these Laws a fleet & army was sent to invest by Sea & Land this devoted Town. These Violations of the rights of a Sister Colony, alarmed all the rest, in such a manner, as that their common oppressions effected that Junction which nothing else could have done, & established the firmest union, & closest attachment to each other. This dictated the Necessity of sending Delegates from each Colony to form at Philadelphia, a Council for the good of the whole Continent. Among many other things calculated for general Safety this eminent Body of disinterested Patriots, came to a Resolution to forego the advantages for themselves & Constituents of any commercial Intercourse with G. Britain, untill her Justice should induc her to restore to the Americans their violated rights, but that this might be productive of as little Injury as possible to

our Connections in G. Britain, the Period for retaining our Exports was deferred 'till the 10<sup>th</sup> of the ensuing September in order to give the Merchants an opportunity of sending out the last Crop of Tobacco. The near approach of the time limited for non exportation, has produced many Speculations in Tob<sup>o</sup> to the great augmentation of its Price, both here & in England and indeed as no Tobacco will probably be shipped from hence, next year, unless an accommodation should take Place, it will no doubt dictate to you and my other Friends in Guernsey the Propriety of not parting with the Lord Chatham's Cargoe, but at a very considerable Profit, which surely is to be made by yours as it is laid in at 5/. & the last commissioned Tob<sup>o</sup> @ 3/6 per Cent, under the Price which is, & for some time past has been given, very eagerly, for this Commodity. To return to the Affairs of America. The Plan of a Commercial opposition to the encroachments the Parliament had made upon the Rights of the Subject, here, had been adopted in this Colony more than twelve Months past, and confirmed by the Gen<sup>l</sup> Congress, in September last, with a little variation as to time, in expectation of its engaging the People of England in our favour, and we are told it has in some Measure had that effect, but we have feel'd no good from their Petitions and Reasonings in our favour. The Parliaments refusal to grant any redress this Session, & resolving to proceed by force against the northern Colonies, induced them to prepare for their defence, after having patiently suffered for almost a year, every Insult, & Irritation from an Army & Navy in and about the Town; The Action at Concord & Lexington I have mentioned, it was bloody the troops began it, & the People defeated & persued them into Cha<sup>s</sup> Town, near twenty miles from the Place where the Action began; Since this Action the Provincials 12 or 15,000 strong have been posted near Boston & the neighbouring Towns, to watch the motions of the King's Troops. The Contiguity of the two Armies has from that time 'till the 17<sup>th</sup> of June occasioned several Skirmishes. On that day it seems an action of considerable Moment did happen, but as the accounts are vague & uncertain I cannot form any cer-

tain Conclusion as to the Event, but I believe the Regulars sustained a greater loss than the Provincials, but kept the ground. Other accounts again say that the Regulars lost 1000 Men which I deem next to an impossibility. I believe the Provincials had the advantage. There probably will be some bloody Battles this Summer, and before it expires Lord Sandwich may be convinced that the Americans are not such Poltroons as he, in the House of Lords, thought proper to represent them. Upon the whole, what can G Britain gain by a Conquest of her Colonies I will venture to affirm neither Honor nor Profit. Had she been content to have governed her American Subjects upon liberal Principles, she would in a little time have derived immense Benefits from their increase in Trade & Population, & would in the Course of Commerce alone have experienced a Source of Wealth, which by War Desolation & Exaction she can never acquire. Is it not shocking to think of the King's Troops burning Charles Town, for the advantage of attacking the Provincials under cover of the Smoak. I certainly must have tired you with Politicks; 'tho I have treated this Subject in so general & concise a Manner that you have merely the outlines but I send by Capt. Maingey the News Papers for two or three Weeks back. If an opportunity should occur to New York or any part of the Continent I should be happy to hear from you. By our non-Exportation agreement G. Britain will lose a Remittance of at least one Million from this Country, our Wheat particularly is the finest Crop that has been recollected & the quantity great beyond any Instance heretofore; if Cap<sup>t</sup>. Maingey's Commission for wheat and flour could have been executed I should have had pleasure in a Compliance with the Terms, as it is so very easy for me to do it, & so much in my way, to do it advantageously as I always buy & therefore the purchase of a Ship Load would be unperceived & would add nothing to its Price, whereas in other Instances, it generally augments the Price, by giving an Alarm of a great foreign demand. This in future you may please mention if in your way to my advantage. The Price of your Tobacco being  $1/6$  per Cent under that of the other Gentle-



men's pray explain to them, as I have fully accounted for it to you, from the early arrival of your Orders. Had the last Orders, from M<sup>r</sup> de Jersey for the 125 Hogs<sup>da</sup> come to hand one Month later the Tob<sup>o</sup> would have cost them 27/6. I wish you that Tranquility & Happiness, which we Americans must be strangers to for some time. I am under the highest Sense of your civility & favours, with regard y<sup>r</sup> mo. obliged

& obed<sup>t</sup> Servant

J. Banister for himself

&

Phripp & Bowdoin.

[Endorsed]      To  
                  Elisha Tupper Esq<sup>r</sup>  
                  Guernsey.

By Cap<sup>t</sup> Maingey  
in the L<sup>d</sup> Chatham  
Q: D: C.